



**International Convention
on the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination**

Distr.
GENERAL

CERD/C/SR.1133
5 March 1996

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Forty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1133rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 28 February 1996, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BANTON

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 6) (continued)

Twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports of the Russian Federation
(CERD/C/263/Add.9; HRI/CORE/1/Add.52)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Kolossovsky, Mr. Chernenko, Mr. Zorin, Mr. Davydov, Mr. Demidov, Mr. Parshikov, Mr. Tcherbak, Mr. Malquinov, Ms. Sulitskaya, Mr. Boitchenko, Mr. Dolgoborodov and Mr. Tchoumarly (Russian Federation) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. KOLOSSOVSKY (Russian Federation), introducing his country's twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports (CERD/C/263/Add.9), said that they should be read in conjunction with document HRI/CORE/1/Add.52, which contained relevant statistical, demographic, economic and historical information. When the situation in Russia had last been considered by the Committee, that country had formed part of the Soviet Union. In its first appearance before the Committee as an independent State, his country wished to stress that the proscription of racial discrimination and the provision of equal rights for all, regardless of nationality, language or attitude to religion, were essential features of Russia as a State containing 176 nationalities and ethnic groups. The establishment of democracy was hampered by delicate problems among the country's various peoples, which were not of recent origin; in the past they had merely been swept under the carpet. In some cases they had been complicated by the breakup of the USSR, but efforts were being made - albeit slowly - to overcome them. The adoption of the new Constitution, by referendum, had come only at the end of 1993.

3. The Russian Federation faced a wide range of complex problems. To protect human rights and freedoms it required both a mature system of laws and an effective mechanism for applying legislative standards. The basis for such laws was contained in the Constitution, in accordance with the universally recognized principles and standards of international law. The federal structure of the country allowed for the cultural and political autonomy of its peoples (art. 5, para. 3, of the Constitution), without detracting from its territorial integrity. The Federation contained 21 republics, 10 national autonomous regions and 1 autonomous area. Indigenous peoples formed a majority in only 6 republics. The various forms of administrative organization obtaining in the country enabled each ethnic group to follow its own social, economic, cultural, religious and legal traditions. The task that remained was to create organs of local self-government, the structure and functions of which would be determined by the inhabitants themselves.

4. The Russian Federation Treaty had been instrumental in improving the distribution of power between the Federal Government and the republics and regions. As a result, the threat of disintegration that had faced the country in 1992-1993 had receded. The agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan was an example of constructive efforts to balance rival powers, and similar agreements were in preparation. A number of republics, taking advantage of their new rights, had adopted legislation guaranteeing the rights of national minorities, which went even further than

the federal legislation. There was a real possibility that conflicting interests and standards could be harmonized, since all parties understood the need for compromise and a balance of legal principles.

5. Russian legislation so far lacked a specific definition of racial discrimination, but comprehensive standards were in place that met the requirements of the Convention, both in the Constitution and in federal laws. Article 19 of the Constitution forbade any restrictions on the rights of the individual. Article 29 forbade propaganda of a social, racial, national or linguistic nature and any action likely to arouse social, racial, national or religious hatred or hostility. With regard to self-identification, everyone could decide his or her own national orientation, with no requirement of public disclosure (art. 26 of the Constitution).

6. The law on social organizations, adopted in May 1995, banned the establishment and functioning of social organizations whose aims and actions tended to arouse racial, social, national or religious discord. Similar provisions were contained in the law on meetings, demonstrations, processions and picketing, while a Presidential Decree provided for measures to combat manifestations of fascism and other forms of political extremism. In that connection, a draft federal law would make the promotion of fascism and other forms of political extremism a criminal and administrative offence. Acts intended to stir up racial, national or religious hatred were covered by article 74 of the Criminal Code, which laid down a penalty of up to 10 years' deprivation of liberty for such offences. But the practical application of the article had to take account of the need to protect freedom of opinion and expression.

7. The President had recommended that the Supreme Court should apply the rules relating to individual and corporate responsibility in the matter of human rights violations and clarify existing legal concepts in that field. Pursuant to that recommendation, the Supreme Court planned to issue guidelines to the judiciary. The process had been delayed as a result of the redrafting of the relevant provisions of the new Criminal Code.

8. International treaties signed by the Russian Federation and the principles of international law formed part of the country's legal system. Judges were therefore free to apply the provisions of such treaties, including those of the Convention. To assist judges who might be inexperienced in that area, instruction was given in applying international standards, particularly those concerned with human rights. Seminars were held with the participation of leading foreign experts on the problem of democratizing the appointment of judges.

9. The Government would shortly be submitting to the State Duma its amended draft Concept of National Policy, which would set out the country's priorities with regard to relations between national groups and discuss the coordination of legislative activity at every level. The principles to be enunciated in the document included equal rights and freedoms, equality of all Russians in their dealings with federal bodies, guaranteed rights for numerically small national groups, and the prohibition of social groups whose aim or effect was to arouse racial, national or religious hatred.

10. Measures to protect the rights of national minorities and indigenous national groups, including numerically small groups, and to promote their autonomy, were being applied at both federal and local level. Such "positive discrimination" was justified and, indeed, essential in the current circumstances. Since the beginning of the decade national minorities had also had the right to receive instruction in their own languages, and that right was currently being exercised in thousands of schools.

11. Migration represented a major problem for the Russian Federation, which was sheltering hundreds of thousands of refugees from the countries of the former USSR and from various Asian and African States. Such an influx naturally gave rise to all sorts of problems which the Russian Federation was attempting to solve on the basis of international standards. The draft Concept of National Policy provided for programmes to protect the rights of refugees and forced migrants.

12. In accordance with article 62 of the Constitution, foreigners enjoyed equal rights with Russians, subject only to restrictions prescribed by federal law or international treaties. For example, foreigners could not hold government office.

13. The draft law on national and cultural autonomy had received its first reading in the State Duma in November 1995. Similarly, a third reading had been given to the draft law on the basic legal status of small indigenous population groups, which was intended to uphold the guarantees enshrined in article 69 of the Constitution, by providing for the preservation, revival and development of the culture of such groups.

14. The situation in the Chechen Republic was perceived as a national tragedy at every level of society. The authorities were making every effort to resolve the problem by peaceful political means. The origins of the crisis were political, not national or religious. An illegal regime had taken power in Chechnya by force and had clearly separatist leanings. In recent months it had increasingly resorted to terrorist methods.

15. Since the end of 1991 the Russian Federation had come a long way towards establishing a democratic State. National legislation and practice were close to meeting current international standards, as was evidenced by the country's admission to the Council of Europe. But much remained to be done.

16. Mr. WOLFRUM (Country Rapporteur) emphasized the uniquely momentous changes taking place in the Russian Federation. The report, however, did not fully reflect those changes. Its section headings corresponded to certain elements of articles 2, 4 and 5 of the Convention, but it seemed to be structured according to Russian constitutional law rather than along the lines of the Convention.

17. In 1993 President Yeltsin had established a special Commission on Human Rights, headed by Sergei Kovalev, a former dissident and political prisoner widely respected in human rights circles. In June 1994 the Commission had drafted an unprecedented, highly critical report on human rights practices in Russia in 1993. Human rights monitors had given the President high marks for creating the Commission, but the Government's dialogue with human rights

organizations had broken down as a result of the Russian military operation in the Chechen Republic. The Government had been charged with the indiscriminate use of force, the dissemination of disinformation and an attempt to suppress critical parts of the report in the mass media.

18. There were gaps in the periodic report that needed filling. The Russian Federation was not only composed of various administrative units, but had a diversity of populations belonging to more than 100 nationalities and ethnic groups; they included Russians (82.6 per cent), Tatars (3.6 per cent), Ukrainians (2.7 per cent), Chuvash (1.7 per cent) and Jews (0.4 per cent). The protection of the rights of national minorities and small indigenous population groups was regulated at federal level through the Constitution and other texts, but also through texts adopted by the republics and other regions and territories. There was also a body of legislation requiring the State to guarantee the cultural and linguistic autonomy of minorities. Under the Russian Constitution, civil rights and freedoms were vested in each individual from birth onwards and the use of the Russian language was prescribed throughout the territory, although the republics were entitled to their own languages. The republics also appeared to have jurisdiction over educational matters, and article 43 of the Constitution guaranteed everyone the right to education.

19. The report stated that article 69 of the Constitution guaranteed the rights of small indigenous population groups, in accordance with the principles and norms of international law. He wondered whether that meant that international agreements, including the Convention, had been incorporated in Russian law and accepted as the basis of court rulings. Similarly, he asked what status the Convention enjoyed under Russian law and whether international agreements took precedence over national law.

20. Despite the welcome existence of legislative instruments such as the Declaration on State Sovereignty and the Law on languages, most constituent entities of the Russian Federation lacked a precise legislative policy to deal with the problems of national minorities. However, several republics were trying to rectify the situation. Details missing from the report, with respect to action taken and practical improvements effected in that regard, would be welcomed by the Committee.

21. A Council of Europe delegation, which had visited Moscow to talk to representatives of minorities living in the Russian Federation, had been told by a representative of the Ukrainian minority that individual rights of national minorities in the Russian Federation were not violated because such rights simply did not exist. If that was true and the Constitution provided no effective protection for those rights, might not implementing legislation be called for? The delegation had learned of a series of bills dealing with the rights of minorities and indigenous populations, on which more information should be provided.

22. A further problem concerned the identification of national minorities and the legislative protection they needed. Certain national populations lived as a compact group within their own republic. In that case, protection was provided by the republic concerned. The question that arose was how protection could be guaranteed to minorities not concentrated in a specific

area, such as Greeks, Jews and Germans. The same problem applied in certain areas to Russians who were in a minority position, living dispersed among other ethnic groups.

23. With regard to cultural problems, it had been claimed that not a single school in Moscow provided instruction in the language of that city's 3,000 Tatar residents. Representatives of the Polish minority in Russia had claimed that their associations faced financing problems, although Government support had been provided. The rehabilitation and restitution of buildings depended on the identification of minorities. Church property had been handed back to the Russian Orthodox Church, but there were fewer examples of the handing over of Polish churches, a situation that deserved comment from the Russian delegation. During the Council of Europe's meeting, most representatives of minorities had mentioned the absence of a nationwide broadcasting system in minority languages - again, a situation on which the Russian delegation might wish to provide details.

24. The report of the Russian Federation outlined basic legal provisions which gave effect to the Convention, in particular article 19, paragraph 2, of the Constitution. However, the scope of the constitutional provision was narrower than that of article 1 of the Convention, since it mentioned only equality of rights and did not extend to "distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference". Nor did it make any reference to "descent", a term used in article 1 of the Convention. The report referred to ongoing efforts to make up for historical injustices suffered by national groups that had been forced to resettle and subjected to other forms of repression. The Law of 26 April 1991 on the rehabilitation of repressed national groups was mentioned, albeit briefly. The Committee would be interested to hear details of the territories restored, the institutions created and the compensation paid. The report also referred to the rehabilitation of minorities such as the Kalmyk, Balkar, Yakut and Karachai national groups but failed to say whether the situation of those groups had improved or to give details of other groups such as the Meskhetian Turks and the Nenets.

25. Information was also lacking on the situation in the Republic of Ingushetia and the problems of North Ossetia. The Human Rights Committee had expressed deep concern at the large numbers of refugees resulting from the war between the Ingush and the Ossetians in North Ossetia and the violent incidents which had occurred when Ossetians had attempted to return home. He requested information on the refugee situation in the region and the state of implementation of Federal Government measures.

26. With regard to article 2 of the Convention, the report dealt extensively with the protection of particular ethnic groups. However, details of a Federal Agreement, agreements between national groups and a multilateral agreement on matters connected with the restoration of the rights of persons who had been deported would have to be fleshed out before the Committee could make a judicious assessment of the situation.

27. Clarification was needed of the statement in the report that the Russian Federation had not yet devised a comprehensive legal policy to protect the rights and interests of minorities.

28. It was regrettable that the delegation's oral presentation had barely touched upon the unfortunate situation in Chechnya. Many sources had claimed that the Russian military had used excessive force when suppressing the attempted secession, which had led to unnecessary suffering among the civilian population and at least 30,000 deaths. Speaking on behalf of the Russian Federation at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Kovalev had referred to the "mistaken" use of force in Chechnya. He had also called for an investigation into the allegations of arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment of prisoners, torture and pillaging. The Committee would appreciate further information on the composition, functioning and findings of the new commissions that had reportedly been set up to investigate human rights violations in Chechnya.

29. He invited the delegation to comment on reports of ill-treatment of Chechens living outside Chechnya and allegations that Chechens were being illegally detained, barred from living in urban areas and subjected to beatings and other human rights violations during detention.

30. There were also allegations that Chechen teenagers and men were being rounded up and placed in so-called "filtration camps". The Human Rights Committee had voiced concern about the reported treatment of detainees at the camps and the fact that the International Committee of the Red Cross was being denied access.

31. Individual cases of the violation of the rights of Chechens had been reported in the Astrakhan region. Similarly, Chechen students had been expelled from agricultural technical schools in the Volgograd region. There were also reports of Chechens being expelled from villages in the Kotovski district. He invited the delegation to comment. It was alleged that those were not isolated incidents in the Volgograd region, but common occurrences.

32. Despite the existence of constitutional guarantees for the protection of minorities, they were not and could not be fully implemented. For example, in 1991, the Constitutional Supervision Committee had ruled that residence permit laws which hindered freedom of movement were unconstitutional, violated international law and would be invalid as from 1 January 1992. However, there were reports that they had been revived at local government level. The Human Rights Committee had expressed concern at the unconstitutional nature of the residence permit system which was applied in breach of article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He requested the delegation's views on the matter.

33. The Human Rights Committee had noted with concern that the definition of the term "minorities" did not give protection to all persons, and recommended that the relevant legislation should be amended so as to embrace ethnic, religious and linguistic as well as national minorities, pursuant to articles 2, 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It had also documented various allegations of discrimination against non-Russians in the Russian Federation, including instances of police intimidation.

34. The legislation prepared in 1993, and later adopted by the Assembly of Deputies, on the legal status of indigenous peoples of the Russian North

embodied commendable principles relating to the protection of traditional ways of life. It would be interesting to receive further information not only on the legislation and the groups covered by it but on the actual status of such peoples.

35. It was clear that the Russian Federation possessed the machinery to implement article 4 of the Convention. However, the activities of the National Republican Party of Russia and the signs of growing anti-Semitism were examples of the need for vigilance. The Committee was therefore anxious to know how effectively the machinery was being used - for example, whether the closure, announced in December 1993, of 100 publications regarded as fascist had been carried out.

36. With regard to article 5, the principle of equality before the law was enshrined in Russian law; but it would be useful to have information, lacking in the report, on the judicial system, court proceedings and the independence of judges. With regard to subparagraph (b) of that article, he sought an explanation of the numerous allegations of police brutality reported by the Special Rapporteur on torture following his visit to the Russian Federation in 1994 (E/CN.4/1995/34/Add.1, para. 20). Similarly worrying were the possible discriminatory effects of local laws such as the Moscow Civil Government Ordinance, No. 1122 of 7 December 1993, relating to residence permits (propiskas).

37. With regard to article 7, the welcome information that non-Russian languages were taught in some 2,000 schools was offset by the report that educational campaigns to combat racial discrimination had disappeared, and that accommodation advertisements in newspapers often specified restrictions based on race or nationality. Regarding article 14, he wondered whether the authorities' decision to accept individual communications had been made public, and how extensively the Convention had been disseminated in Russia.

38. Summing up, he felt that the report focused too narrowly on the constitutional framework rather than on legislation and enforcement. More comprehensive implementing legislation was required urgently, for the sake of compliance with the Convention, as was a definition of minorities broad enough to cover all the groups concerned. The language problem needed to be addressed, and the application of articles 2 (2) and 4 of the Convention should be strengthened. Excessive use of force in Chechnya and other places should be made punishable by law. The Committee needed a stronger information base, and the next report should be fuller.

39. Mr. de GOUTTES said that the Russian Federation's thirteenth periodic report was made more interesting by the fact that the country had recently joined the Council of Europe and became a party to the European Convention on Human Rights, article 14 of which declared non-discrimination a legal right. Although the report made reference to applicable human rights instruments, it contained none of the information required by the Committee in respect of such recent events as the conflicts in Chechnya and Ingushetia. Since the Russian Federation was now a member of the Council of Europe, he wondered whether it had accepted the right of individual petition under article 25 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In connection with judicial reform, he asked whether there had been a review of the role of the courts and the

procurator's office with regard to the protection of human rights. He wished to know what provisions regarding ethnic minorities were contained in the instruments of the Commonwealth of Independent States and how those texts compared with the relevant Council of Europe instruments.

40. With regard to the rehabilitation of illegally repressed national groups, he asked which groups benefited from the assistance and protection measures referred to on page 5 of the report, and whether the peoples of Chechnya and Ingushetia were included. Regarding action to combat xenophobia and excessive nationalism, he requested details on the groups which, according to the report, had been deprived, on 12 December 1993, of the right to register for participation in elections; he also wondered whether there were safeguards against the possible use of such measures against bona fide opposition movements. Lastly, he wondered why only 10 cases had been brought before the courts under article 74 of the Criminal Code, relating to racial or national hatred or discord, why 24 cases had been closed, and why there had been only one prosecution in 1993 and none in 1994. In general, the availability of specific legislation and legal remedies was always a true test of the Convention's implementation.

41. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ stressed the importance of the guaranteed equality before the law provided for in article 19, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, which was backed by a prohibition of propaganda or agitation to encourage racial hatred or hostility, or ideas of social, racial or national superiority. Russian legislation not only made such acts punishable but provided for compensation for harm caused by the State. In addition, Presidential Decree No. 1661, of 19 October 1993, enabled measures to be taken against bodies which promoted national hostility or social discord. He requested details of the scope of the relevant legislation, since article 4 of the Convention called for the punishment, as well as the prohibition, of such activities and of the bodies responsible for them. With regard to the Federal Law of 14 April 1995 on public associations, which prohibited the formation of associations aimed at fomenting social or racial discord, he asked what sanctions would be imposed on any existing association of that kind. Further details were needed on the actual implementation of Presidential Decree No. 1661.

42. He wondered whether article 74 of the Criminal Code was applied consistently, since it appeared that it had served as the basis for only 10 cases brought before the courts. It would be useful to have further information about the nature of those cases, the sentences passed and any compensation paid, as well as information on any cases still sub judice, and cases of job discrimination.

43. With regard to article 48 of the Constitution, which guaranteed the right to free legal assistance, it would be useful to have details of its application to the various national or racial groups. Regarding article 9, he inquired about the scope of the constitutional right to free enjoyment by peoples of their wealth and natural resources.

44. With regard to the regime established under the Law of 19 February 1993 on forced resettlement as a result of persecution, he requested information concerning perpetrators, the status of victims and the possibility of

compensation and return to place of origin. With regard to the "positive" protection of minorities, including preservation of the mother tongue, he wondered what measures had been adopted to promote minority education, health and employment.

45. The Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the RSFSR, of 12 June 1990, emphasized the right to self-determination of each national group in the Republic, and the report gave several examples of developments relevant to that right in some parts of the Federation. In the case of Chechnya, however, more information was needed on an issue that had ethnic and racial implications. Similarly, there was a need for further information about the conflict between Ossetia and Ingushetia.

46. The Committee should be given details of measures taken under article 69 of the Constitution guaranteeing the rights of small indigenous national groups, including the texts concerning their legal status once the relevant legislation had been passed. He wished to know more about the draft multilateral convention guaranteeing the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities currently being considered by the parliaments of member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The signing of the Declaration concerning principles of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Hungary to guarantee minority rights was a welcome development, and he asked whether similar instruments had been signed with other countries whose citizens constituted minority groups within the Russian Federation. He regretted the absence of information on the implementation of article 7 of the Convention, and asked whether information was disseminated on the aims and purposes of the Convention.

47. Mr. GARVALOV said that the Russian Federation's long experience of multinational and multi-ethnic relations was a source of enrichment to the country. The thirteenth periodic report formed a sound basis for cooperation with the Committee, but said nothing about Chechnya, contained little specific information about court cases involving charges of racial discrimination and placed too much emphasis on the Constitution and certain presidential decrees and too little on judicial and administrative practices. He asked whether the fact that a number of social associations and parties had been deprived of the right to register for participation in elections meant that they were not barred from other activities. Further details were required about the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, which the Committee regarded as mandatory. On the subject of restrictions under article 16 of the Federal Law on public associations, he asked whether political parties established on the basis of ethnic or religious affiliation were allowed to register and operate normally. Drawing attention to the statement that the Russian Federation had yet devised a comprehensive legal policy to protect the rights and interests of minorities, he asked what was the cause of the delays mentioned. He welcomed the frank admission of obstacles encountered in determining national policy priorities in that field.

48. Referring to the draft law on national and cultural autonomy, he inquired about the implications of national autonomy. He noted with interest the existence of a CIS convention guaranteeing the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, which would be complemented by bilateral agreements with

CIS countries not parties to the convention. He asked whether the Russian Federation intended to sign and ratify the Council of Europe's framework convention on the rights of national minorities.

49. On the subject of Chechnya, he opposed secession but could not condone large-scale military or paramilitary operations resulting in major loss of life. More than an ethnic problem, Chechnya was a test of the respective merits of the political and the military option as applied to ethnic conflicts. It was also a test of the right of self-determination.

50. Without seeking to criticize or prejudge the actions taken by a sovereign State in the national interest, he requested clarification of the terms employed in the part of the report concerned with minority rights, which referred variously to the rights of "national groups", "minorities", "peoples", "ethnic communities", and so on. Those distinctions were very important when it came to the right of self-determination, since, although there was a body of opinion in favour of granting that right to minorities, international law did not go that far, recognizing it only as a right of peoples. A willingness to accord the right of self-determination to minorities would be a most interesting development and would have far-reaching consequences. If only collective entities and their collective rights were to be recognized, he wondered whether that approach was compatible with the provisions of the proposed law regulating the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

51. Mr. van BOVEN said that the report was incomplete, providing little information on article 3 of the Convention and, in particular, on article 5 (d) (i) and social rights under article 5 (e) (i), (iii) and (iv), areas in which there was evidence of persistent racial and ethnic discrimination. It was also regrettable that the Russian Federation had failed to respond to the Committee's decision 1 (46) urgently requesting a report on the subject of Chechnya. He, too, was concerned about extremism in political parties, extra-parliamentary groupings and ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic publications, and asked whether the Government and prosecuting agencies were sufficiently vigilant on that issue. Comments would also be welcome on disturbing reports from Human Rights Watch and other organizations about actions against persons belonging to different nationalities and with a darker skin colour by special control forces, and also about police brutality. He drew attention to the Committee's general recommendation XIII on the training of law enforcement officials, and asked what steps had been taken in that direction. He requested further information on the rehabilitation of repressed national groups, referred to on pages 3 and 4 of the report, and particularly on reparation. He understood that special measures were being taken on an individual basis to help Russian citizens of any nationality who were the victims of forced resettlement. More information was needed on the relationship between individual and collective measures. Like Mr. Garvalov, he would be interested to hear the delegation's interpretation of the right of self-determination.

52. He asked what the Government was doing to promote the dissemination of the Convention and other human rights instruments and of the Committee's report and concluding observations. It was gratifying to note that the Russian Federation had made the declaration under article 14 of the

Convention, but he asked what was being done to publicize the procedure for submitting individual communications. Drawing attention to the Committee's general recommendation XVIII on the establishment of an international tribunal to prosecute crimes against humanity, particularly operative paragraph 1 thereof, he wished to know whether the Russian Federation supported developments in that direction.

53. He hoped that the Russian Federation would be able to inform the Committee that it would be accepting the amendment to the Convention providing for the financing of the Committee's activities from the regular budget of the United Nations, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 47/111.

54. Mr. YUTZIS was anxious to see qualitative advances in the transition process under way in the Russian Federation. The report regrettably provided little specific information on how legal texts were applied in practice. There seemed to be some discrepancy between the information provided in the report and reality on the ground. He sought confirmation of his understanding that there was in fact no ombudsman's office in the Russian Federation and that the most recent effort to introduce a law on the subject, in February 1995, had failed.

55. He was deeply concerned about certain reported manifestations of racism. In that connection, he cited the nationalistic and anti-Semitic sentiments expressed by Mr. Kasimovsky, editor-in-chief of the newspaper Shturmovik. Another disturbing development had been the recent visit to the Russian Federation by Mr. Le Pen, leader of the French National Front party, to meet Mr. Zhirinovsky, head of the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, with the aim of agreeing on an alliance between the nationalist parties of Spain, Italy, Austria, the United Kingdom, the Russian Federation and France. Such an alliance would be a most disturbing development. He appreciated that it was difficult to prevent a citizen of one country from visiting another, but public utterances of that kind gave cause for concern and prompted the question whether they were isolated cases or symptomatic of a broader body of opinion, which might have serious consequences. Some comment on that issue was requested.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.